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NSC Briefing

6 April 1954

MILITARY SITUATION THROUGHOUT INDOCHINA

- I. Whatever outcome at Dien Bien Phu, Tonkin delta is and will remain key area.
 - A. Viet Minh strength there at all times high; includes 20,000 regulars - 55,000 auxiliaries.
 1. They make daily routine of ambushing French units, cutting Haiphong - Hanoi surface route; supply of Hanoi becoming difficult.
 2. Viet Minh has not yet exerted full capabilities in delta; heavier action expected.
 3. Nine regular battalions spaced along Hanoi - Haiphong route expected to try soon to isolate Hanoi.
 - B. French mobile reserves in delta, about 45 battalions in November, depleted by dispersal to Dien Bien Phu and Laos to 17.
 1. Despite situation at Dien Bien Phu, Navarre afraid to pull out last two paratroop battalions in delta.
- II. In South Vietnam, French Union regulars total 37 battalions.
 - A. Viet Minh has only 10 understrength regular battalions.
 - B. But French are tied down all over countryside, guarding roads and key installations.
 1. Unable to reduce strength to reinforce elsewhere.
- III. In Central Vietnam, French have 19 battalions in Operation Atlante, begun last January.
 - A. Operation has cleared fairly large strip of coast but has not seriously engaged Viet Minh.

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- B. Some units used in Atlante pulled from plateau area and as result French have lost several posts there.
 - C. Dien Bien Phu requirements have cut into force planned for Atlante and operation has recently slowed.
- IV. Viet Minh decision to attack Dien Bien Phu eliminated at least for time being main threat to Laos.
- A. Total French Union forces in Laos are 40 battalions.
 - 1. Eight of these in northern Laos operating against regionals in area where enemy moved down toward Luang Prabang and back last winter.
 - 2. Another 25 battalions stationed in central and southern Laos to guard against second enemy thrust to the Mekong.
 - 3. Viet Minh force that got there last December moved back but is still largely intact; enemy regulars in all Laos total 10 battalions.
- V. Viet Minh incursion of northern Cambodia last week marks first movement of organized VietMinh group across that country's borders.
- A. Estimated at up to two battalions, force is too small to present real threat; Viet Minh motive probably to make political capital, prior Geneva.
 - B. But Viet Minh has long had about 1000 regulars and 6500 auxiliaries operating as guerrillas in Cambodia.
 - C. Total French Union strength is 15 battalions.
 - D. French on 2 April ordered back to Cambodia two French Union battalions of Cambodian recruits that had been moved to southern Laos.

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